



# BUDGETING

## • FOR YOUR ALBUM •

Planning the time and money you'll need for a successful recording and CD release.



# RECORDING *and* RELEASING

— an album or EP on CD takes a lot of —

# TIME & EFFORT

There's the time and money you spend:



WRITING



REHEARSING



RECORDING



DESIGNING



MANUFACTURING



DISTRIBUTING

— not to mention: —

PRE-PRODUCTION • PHOTOGRAPHY • PROMOTION • SALES



It can be overwhelming,

but you can find

• **SUCCESS** •

with a sturdy plan.



This guide will help you create a plan  
— that suits you, breaking the —  
recording and release processes into

→ *manageable steps.* →



## SONGWRITING / SONG SELECTION

*Whether you're in an original band, playing jazz standards, or performing in a classical quartet, building a repertoire of excellent material is extremely important – it's what you have to work with when it comes to choosing the songs for your release!*

### 1. Songwriting

Let's face it – every song you dream up is not your best. A pretty standard ratio in the music industry is one recordable song for every three or four written. That means you might only release 25% of your material! Sound harsh? The only way to compete with all the other great music artists out there is to always put your best foot forward. Be selective, work hard, and vet your material however you can: live, online, CD handouts, social media... find ways to get feedback and use it to help you record and release your very best material. Obviously, that means it might take many months to get enough material together for your release, but the investment in time will be worth it.

### 2. Who Owns The Songs?

If you are in a collaborative situation – a band, duo, or any co-writing relationship – take the time to document and agree on who wrote what while you are creating the music. Determining who owns the copyright and how writing is split among the songwriters in advance will make things easier and save you time, money, and heartache down the road.

### 3. Cover Songs

Including material by other writers is standard practice in many genres, and including a cover song in your release can be a fun way to connect with your audience, explore different musical styles, or give a nod to a personal influence, no matter what your genre. Choosing and arranging a cover song, especially for an artist who typically writes his/her own music, can take as much effort as writing your own. Find a song you can adapt to your own style, that you (and your fans) can relate to, and try to create a version of the song that's a clear variation from the original recording.

### 4. Mechanical License

If you choose to cover a song on your release, you need to get the proper licenses. Copyright law requires that you obtain a mechanical license before distributing a recording containing any composition you didn't write. Unless the song is in the public domain, mechanical licenses are issued by the owner of the copyright (publishers, labels, estates, songwriters, composers). The publishing royalty is a statutory rate of 9.1¢ per unit for all recordings up to five minutes (it is 1.75¢ per minute if a track is over five). Mechanical licenses are compulsory, meaning you don't need permission from the copyright owner to record his/her song, you just need to obtain the necessary license. Our friends at [Easy Song Licensing](#) can help you clear your cover songs with no hassle and no confusion.

### 5. Copyrighting

Your music is copyrighted as soon as you make a physical copy – including any recording or written transcription. That doesn't mean it's not a good idea to spend the money required to officially copyright your compositions with the Library of Congress (online fees are \$35 for a basic claim of an original work). Copyrighting gives you additional backup if you ever need to go to court, and it allows for a formalization of the writing credits as determined in #2.

## 6. Samples And Loops

Just like you need a mechanical license for cover songs, you are required to get clearance for all samples used in your recording. This can get rather tricky in many cases, but the law requires you get permission from the copyright owner as well as the owner of the sound recording for all sampled clips you include.



### REHEARSAL

*Preparation for your studio date is essential – and that includes having your material rehearsed to the point of ultimate comfort. Don't waste time and money because you can't execute your part when the time comes to record.*

#### 1. Rehearse With A Purpose

Whatever your musical style, thoroughly rehearsing the material you intend to record is recommended. While some spontaneity in the studio/recording process can be beneficial, rehearsing your parts so you can play them in your sleep will provide the comfort and confidence you need to explore ideas in the studio if the opportunity presents itself. Experiment while you are rehearsing, and do not be afraid to push your comfort levels – this is the time to make (and learn from) mistakes. Create an environment where everyone is free to explore their artistic whims as you work toward the final arrangements that best suit the players and the songs.

#### 2. Record Often And Listen Critically

Get clear recordings of your rehearsals – it always sounds different when you listen to the

recording than it did when you were playing! Take time to fine tune every section of music, every part, all the instruments, and all the nuances of the songs you choose to record. Finding out your part doesn't quite fit into the mix in the middle of the recording process can derail your timing and your confidence.

## 3. Rehearse To A Click Track – And Use One In The Studio

If you have a drummer, make sure he/she is comfortable playing to a click, and rehearsing to one is the only way to get there. Even if you do not have a drummer, rehearsing and recording to a click can really improve the professionalism of your playing and your recorded efforts. Not only that, but recording to a click affords you options in the mixing and post-production stages you won't have if you don't use one.



### PRE-PRODUCTION

*Pre-production can encompass any number of different activities – but at the very least, it should answer all the questions about roles, logistics, and expectations before you head into the recording process.*

#### 1. Determine The Scale Needed For Your Recording

If you have a home studio and the skills to achieve a complete recording, you may not have to spend much money on a studio – though having a professional home studio requires a cash outlay for microphones, preamps, a DAW, etc. (and having a home studio set up doesn't mean you have the

skills to make a professional recording). The other end of the scale requires that all your recording be completed in a professional studio, and your costs for that will vary wildly depending on the quality of the studio, the amount of time you need to book, the producer/engineer fees, etc. A common approach to lower your costs while maximizing production value is to record part of a project in a pro studio – perhaps cutting drums and lead vocals tracks – and record the other tracks and incidentals in your home studio. Your budget will largely drive this decision, though your needs will certainly factor into the equation.

## 2. Choose Your Recording Location(s)

Choosing your locations, booking them, and setting your recording schedule is a big part of the budgeting process. Getting these steps out of the way while you're in the early stages of rehearsing can help ensure you don't plan recording time

only to find that the studio or engineer you want is booked or blocked out when you're ready.

## 3. Talk To Your Producer/Engineer

If you're working with an outside producer (anyone not in the band or creative ensemble), it is imperative you establish what the role of the producer will be before the recording process begins. In some cases, the producer's vision has a huge impact the final product, and the band/artist partners with the producer as an equal (if not greater) part of the final equation. In other situations, the producer is essentially an engineer, enlisted to draw out the band's best possible performances and make the most accurate recording of the band's vision. Depending on the expectations of the artist/producer relationship, the producer can partner on decisions involving song selection, tempos, keys, arrangements, and everything that has to do with the songs. The producer can also have a lot to do



# You recorded your album– Now what?

[Guide to crowdfunding your next album >](#)

[Throw the best album release party >](#)

[Alternative ways to market your album >](#)

[How to get your album on Pandora, Spotify and rdio >](#)

[Go international: How to play shows for the State Department and USO >](#)

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with the choice of recording facilities. It is paramount that the artist/producer relationship is defined and agreed upon from the outset, as differences in opinion or expectations can affect the timing, expenditure, and quality of both the recording and experience.

## 4. Pre-recording

Another part of the pre-production process can be recording a CD that includes every potential song you have for the release. If you have the capacity to do a multi-track home recording, this can give the players a chance to execute their parts and analyze every section of every song. If not that, a decent live recording of all the tracks can help the artist, engineer, and producer have a reference for arrangements and song options heading into the recording process.



# RECORDING

*Once the recording locations have been decided and the material agreed upon, having a plan heading into the recording process can keep you on track. Deviating from the plan is always an option, but starting with a clear idea of how to proceed can help keep things progressing and on budget.*

## 1. Determine The Order Of Recording

The genre and musical arrangements of your act will determine a lot about how you'll record, but in a typical multiple-player scenario, there is more than one way to approach the recording process. Drum and rhythm tracks first? Record them all at once, or one instrument at a time? Some producers prefer to go a different route and record a song

a day. Drums and bass at the start, guitar and other instruments after that, vocals and incidentals to finish things off. This keeps everyone involved every day, and can keep each session fresh and inspired.

## 2. Budget 10 Hours Per Song

There is no hard and fast rule. Every producer has his/her own formula, but planning for 10 hours of recording time per song is a starting point. Always budget extra time for the mixing and mastering processes - and remember that the recording process itself most always takes longer than expected.

## 3. Get The Right Format

If you are using separate recording facilities (e.g. pro studio/home studio), make sure the engineer knows exactly what you need to take with you to continue the process on your own. Be sure that your requirements are clear so you leave the studio with precisely the right tracks in a format that is compatible with your home system. And always make backup copies of everything!

## 4. Budget Time And Money For Mastering

Mastering is an important step in the recording process, and you should consider having your work mastered by a separate facility that specializes in this process - like the legendary [Frankford-Wayne mastering studios](#). However you ultimately decide to master your recording, in addition to sweetening and balancing all the tracks, make sure you:

- Have the correct song order
- Are happy with the space between each song
- Remove any noise between tracks
- Add ISRC (International Standard Recording Code) information
- Add CD-text information, such as artist name, album title, and track titles displayed by some CD players



## DESIGN

*When it comes to the look of your CD and the additional collateral included with your record release, having a cohesive (and professional) design to match the quality of your music can make a huge difference. You've put your heart and soul into your project – make sure the design reflects that!*

### 1. Album Title

Sounds stupid, but do not leave this to the last minute. Your album title can directly influence your design, and making sure everyone with a stake in the matter agrees to the title is better done well in advance of the design process.

### 2. Album Design

Having access to a graphic design program does not make you (or your Uncle Jimmy) a graphic designer. Unless you or someone in your entourage is a capable designer, hiring a professional is the best idea. Whoever is executing the design, make sure they are working with the proper templates and that ALL the design elements – text, images, etc. – are formatted properly with the correct resolution for printing. [Oasis Design-Works™](#) is always an excellent and affordable professional option.

### 3. Pick A Package

Oasis offers a number of incredible, professional CD packaging choices, including [Digipaks](#), [Jewel Cases](#), [Green Wallets](#), and [Green Forestry Sleeves](#). Pick the one that best suits your act, the release, your design concepts, space requirements, eco needs, and budget.

### 4. Develop A Theme

A cohesive design theme across all your collateral (merch, posters, album, web site, online efforts, promotional pieces, etc.) will help define your brand and will bring a level of professionalism to your release campaign.

### 5. Plan For Delays

This is good advice for every section of this guide! Not everything comes out perfectly the first time, and many delays are not due to poor planning. They can be caused by a necessary back and forth between the designer and the band for unforeseen circumstances. Any creative process takes time, so plan for it.

### 6. Thank You And Liner Notes

If you plan to include liner notes, start making your thank yous and lists of credits during the rehearsal and recording process. Make sure all other liner notes (lyrics, stories, comments, credits, etc.) are tackled ahead of time. Also, if you have a cover song and want to include those lyrics in your CD package's artwork, you need a separate license.

### 7. Use Legal Artwork

Just like you need permission to record someone else's composition, you'll need permission to use any photographs, graphics, logos, and artwork that isn't your own. There are a number of outlets from which you can purchase stock images or get royalty-free images for your project. Make sure you properly compensate someone if they contribute an image or artwork to your CD or promo materials.

### 8. Photography

A professional photo of your act is useful in many ways. Your web site, promotional materials, CD design, gig posters, your EPK – all of these materials can benefit from a professional photo.





## MANUFACTURING

*The CD manufacturing process is one in the long line of efforts you will embark on in your record release timeline. One word of advice: don't get ahead of yourself scheduling your record release. Recording, designing, writing, and rehearsing can all take longer than you expected, which means you might not get your product to Oasis when you thought you might. We work fast, but don't expect miracles on the manufacturing end to make up for any lost time from the recording process!*

### 1. Turn Time

Oasis turn times are typically 3, 5, or 8 business days, but don't forget to factor in weekends, the time for your approvals, any additional time to make edits/changes, and delivery time. If you approve everything on the spot, we'll keep your project rolling through production, but any edits, changes, or delays in approval will affect your actual turnaround time - not to mention the extra time needed for mastering, designing, or shipping.

### 2. Check Your Materials

Have someone proof every word before submitting your materials to Oasis for manufacturing. When you receive your design proofs, make sure to give everything another thorough check before giving your final approval. It's worth the extra time to make sure everything is correct. Listen to your master from beginning to end before submitting.



**A level playing field for musicians**  
Direct access to decision-makers & fans.  
Transparency. No Hype. Just useful data.

## Why Music Xray?

### Get Deals. Get Fans. Get Better.

As long as there are commercial opportunities for music there will be industry professionals making the decisions regarding which songs and artists are chosen. Those decision makers will use the best tools available to streamline, organize, and optimize their work while reducing the risk of making choices that don't meet their business objectives.

Music Xray creates those tools and makes them available online while simultaneously leveling the playing field for musicians, making it less about who you know and more about pure talent, skill, and market appeal.

**Diagnostics:**  
Track your song's progress as you go with detailed analytics



**Give your career**  
some direction and know where you stand.



**Fan Match:**  
convert potential fans to direct fans



Direct access to over  
**1500**  
top industry pros

Get direct access to thousands of real industry opportunities & the professionals behind them, Music Xray has the highest level of industry engagement. They listen & respond. Guaranteed.

**Sign up for free at [www.musicxray.com](http://www.musicxray.com)**

*We call it a 21st century A&R platform. Our users call it phenomenal.*



Make sure everything sounds exactly as you want it to, including song order and song spacing.

### 3. Gather All Your Materials

Make sure you have everything you need before sending in your job. Among other things, this includes your audio master (don't send us your only one!), design files, and intellectual property rights form.

### 4. Develop A Formula For How Many Units You Want To Order

This may be the most important budgeting step of this entire process, and should be the formula by which you determine your monetary budget for recording, design, and promotion. Determine how many CDs and downloads you believe you can sell. Ask yourself: How many gigs do you play a month? How many CDs can you sell at each gig? How many people are on your mailing list? How many might buy a CD or download online? What other promotional efforts are you doing? Determine a realistic sales figure, and determine what revenue that will bring in. Factor in and subtract whatever profit percentage you want to keep, and that final figure represents your budget. You can also use fan-funding, your own cash reserves, or Uncle Jimmy's endorsement to fund your project, but this process is not a bad one to go through in an effort to ground your recording and promotional efforts in realistic expectations. Once you have a budget figured out, you can work backwards to determine your possible studio expenditures, design allowances, packaging options, etc.

### 5. UPC Code

If you plan to do any online sales through retailers, or if you want your sales tracked by Nielson Sound-Scan, you need a Universal Product Code. Oasis offers them for \$20.



## DISTRIBUTION

*Perhaps the most dramatic shift in the music industry is in the models for distribution. The good news: you have access to worldwide sales without the need of a distributor. The challenge: you need to get your physical and digital product prepared and delivered to your fans, no matter where they are.*

### 1. Plan For Physical And Digital Distribution

One easy way to kick start the distribution of your album is through [Oasis Tools of Promotion™](#) program. This includes:

- Download sales on iTunes, Spotify, AmazonMP3, and Rhapsody
- CD sales on CD Baby
- Physical CDs available at Amazon and on demand at over 15,000 brick and mortar retailers
- A music store widget to sell CDs and MP3s right from your own web site

### 2. Prepare MP3 Versions Of Your Songs

Optimize your songs as MP3s for downloads, streams, giveaways, etc.

### 3. Bonus Material

If your promotional efforts are to include bonus tracks, free downloads of "unreleased" material, or any music not included on the release, budget time for that process.



## PROMOTION

*This warrants a guide of its own, but a basic run-down of your promotional plans can help you determine where you need to budget extra time and funds, and where you might need to solicit help from your fans and your creative team.*

### 1. Social

A concerted and organized social media effort to build up to your CD release takes planning and creativity. All of your promotional efforts should work in tandem with one another, and your social network is a great way to drive people to where you want them to go.

### 2. Web Site

Your web site should reflect the news of your new CD in multiple ways, including design elements connected to the new release, direct links to the locations selling your new CD, and your biography updated to mention the new CD.

### 3. CD Release Party

Some sort of party or CD release show (or series of shows) should be part of the promotional mix to launch your new release. As mentioned before, do not be premature in scheduling this. In addition to making sure you have the actual CDs in hand before the show, effectively promoting this show requires a concentrated PR campaign, which may necessitate waiting on the completion of the CD, or at least the completion of the mastering and MP3 process to provide clips or free downloads and streams.

### 4. PR Campaign

An effective PR campaign can take many weeks to run its course, so make sure your timeline includes sufficient time for this important step. What your campaign covers is largely connected to your available budget. A PR campaign can include press releases, hiring a publicist, appeals to bloggers/reviewers, email campaigns, social media efforts... the list goes on. Mapping out your PR campaign strategies in the rehearsal phase can help you get a handle on the long-term timeline for your project from start to finish.

### 5. Gigs And Merch

A proactive and dynamic plan for gig sales includes a variety of merch for sale, a well-designed display area for your wares, a capable and friendly staffer running your booth or table, and an effort to pitch your CD and merch during the show.

### 6. Email

Nothing is more valuable than your email list. These are the fans who have explicitly told you they want to hear from you. In the months leading up to your release, actively grow your list. In the weeks leading up to your release, let them know about it.

### 7. Video

A great method of promoting anything you are doing is to tie in a video release. Coordinating the time and money for a full-on video could add up to an extraordinary expenditure of resources you do not have, but some behind-the-scenes videos of you in the studio could make for a brilliant spin-off that easily ties into the CD release.

### 8. Blog/Review Submissions

Start a running list of blogs, reviewers, and press you'd like to reach out to early on. Connect in advance, if possible, and try to establish some sort of relationship. When the time comes, make sure you conform to each outlet's specified submission protocol when submitting your CD for review.



● **READY TO START?** ●

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